

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please CANCEL claims 5, 10, and 16 AMEND claims 1, 6, 11, and 15 in accordance with the following:

1. (Currently Amended) A payment form discrimination method for discriminating a payment form which states at least a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

acquiring ~~an image~~ data of the form by optically reading the form;
searching for the payee account number in the image data at an unknown position in accordance with an account number searching rule;

determining a type of the form based on the payee account number from a document information table that stores account numbers correlated with types of the form; and
recovering other data from locations according to the determined type of the form, wherein said account number searching rule comprises:

searching for hyphens in the image data; ~~and~~
judging whether or not an arrangement of the searched hyphens is a specified hyphen arrangement;
~~character-~~ recognizing ~~said payee account number~~ the image data in areas surrounding ~~a hyphen found in the image~~ the searched hyphens which are judged to be in the specified hyphen arrangement; and
determining whether or not the result of the character recognition matches a specific account number regularly.

2-3. (Cancelled).

4. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination method of claim 1, wherein the searching comprises:

recognizing a plurality of account numbers on the payment form; and

merging a plurality of results which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

5. (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) A payment form discrimination apparatus for recognizing a form which states a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

an image reader for acquiring an image data of the form by optically reading the form;

a processing unit, which performs searching for the payee account number in the image data at an unknown position in accordance with an account number searching rule, discriminates a type of form corresponding to said payee account number from a document information table that stores account numbers correlated with types of the form, and recovers other data from locations according to the determined type of the form;

wherein said ~~account-number-searching-rule~~ comprises: searching processing unit searches for hyphens in the image data; and, judges whether or not an arrangement of the searched hyphens is a specified hyphen arrangement, character- recognizes -recognizing said payee account number the image data in areas surrounding a hyphen found in the image the searched hyphens which are judged to have the specified hyphen arrangement, and determines whether or not a result of the character recognition matches a specific account number regularity.

7-8. (Cancelled).

9. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination apparatus of claim 1, wherein the process unit recognizes a plurality of account numbers on the payment form, and merges a plurality of results which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 1, wherein said ~~recognizing~~ searching comprises:

recognizing a-hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image;

judging whether or not said recognized hyphens are characterizing hyphen registered in said account number construction rule in said searching table; and

character-recognizing an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing hyphen by a numeric and a hyphen that are account number recognition category in said searching table.

12. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 4, wherein said searching step further comprises:

a step of determining said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

13. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said processing unit recognizes a hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image, judges whether or not said recognized hyphens are characterizing hyphen registered in said account number construction rule in said searching table, and

character-recognizes an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing hyphen by a numeric and a hyphen that are account number recognition category in said searching table.

14. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said processing unit determines said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

15. (Currently Amended) A method of determining a payment form type, comprising:
optically capturing an image data of a payment form of an unknown type;
searching and determining an account number in an unknown position of the payment form of the unknown type in the image data by searching for hyphens in the image data, and recognizing said payee account number at areas surrounding a hyphen found in the image data;
determining the payment form type using the account number; and
recovering data from locations according to the determined payment form type,
wherein said searching and determining of the account number comprises:

judging whether or not an arrangement of the searched hyphens is a specified hyphen arrangement;

character-recognizing the image data in areas surrounding the searched hyphens
which are judged to be in the specified hyphen arrangement; and

determining whether or not the result of the character recognition matches a specific
account number regularity.

16. (Cancelled).